What Is Claimed Is:

1. A method for publishing information associated with a user, wherein the information comprises a category and an affinity value associated with the category, comprising the steps of:

determining whether an affinity publication policy indicates that the information should not be published without first receiving permission from the user to publish the information; and

transmitting to the user a message that requests the user to submit a response that indicates whether or not the user wishes to have the information published if it is determined that the affinity publication policy indicates that the information should not be published without first receiving permission from the user.

2. The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of determining whether the user submitted a response to the request within a predetermined period of time.

3. The method of claim 2, further comprising the step of publishing the information if it is determined that the user did not submit a response to the request within the predetermined period of time.

4. The method of claim 3, wherein the step of publishing the information comprises the step of updating a profile associated with the user such that the profile indicates that the user has an affinity for the category included in the information.

5. The method of claim 3, further comprising the step of notifying the user that the information was published.

6. The method of claim 2, further comprising the step of not publishing the information if it is determined that the user did not submit a response to the request

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within the predetermined period of time.

7.   The method of claim 6, further comprising the step of notifying the user that the information will not be published.

8.   The method of claim 2, further comprising the step of determining whether an auto-publish flag is set to TRUE or FALSE.

9.   The method of claim 8, further comprising the step of publishing the information if it is determined that the user did not submit a response to the request within the predetermined period of time and it is also determined that the auto-publish flag is set to TRUE.

10.   The method of claim 8, further comprising the step of not publishing the information if it is determined that the user did not submit a response to the request within the predetermined period of time and it is also determined that the auto-publish flag is set to FALSE.

11.   The method of claim 10, further comprising the step of notifying the user that the information will not be published.

13.   The method of claim 2, further comprising the step of determining whether there is a particular affinity publication policy that is associated with the user.

14.   The method of claim 13, further comprising the step of accessing the particular affinity publication policy if it is determined that there is a particular affinity publication policy that is associated with the user.

15.   The method of claim 14, wherein the predetermined amount of time is specified in the particular affinity publication policy.

16.   The method of claim 14, further comprising the step of accessing a default affinity publication policy if it is determined that there is no particular affinity publication policy that is associated with the user.

17.   The method of claim 16, wherein the predetermined amount of time is specified in the default affinity publication policy.

18.   The method of claim 16, wherein the step of determining whether an affinity publication policy indicates that the information should not be published without first receiving permission from the user to publish the information, comprises the step of determining whether the accessed affinity publication policy indicates that the information should not be published without first receiving permission from the user to publish the information.

19.   The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of determining an affinity value threshold.

20.   The method of claim 19, further comprising the step of determining whether the affinity value is less than the affinity value threshold, wherein if the affinity value is less than the affinity value threshold, the information is not published.

21.   The method of claim 1, further comprising the steps of:
receiving the response from the user;
determining whether the response indicates that the user wishes to have the information published; and
publishing the information if it is determined that the response indicates that the user wishes to have the information published.

22.   The method of claim 21, wherein the step of publishing the information

comprises the step of updating a profile associated with the user such that the profile indicates that the user has an affinity for the category included in the information.

23.   A system for discovering and publishing a user's affinities, comprising:

affinity discovery module that function to discover the user's affinities;

an affinity publication policy; and

affinity publishing means for publishing the discovered affinities, wherein the affinity publishing means publishes the discovered affinities in accordance with the affinity publication policy.

24.   The system of claim 23, further comprising a profile associated with the user.

25.   The system of claim 24, wherein the affinity publishing means publishes a user affinity by updating the profile associated with the user.

26.   The system of claim 23, wherein the affinity publication policy indicates whether the affinity publishing means is required to get permission from the user to publish a user affinity prior to publishing the user affinity.

27.   The system of claim 26, wherein the affinity publishing means comprises notification means for notifying the user of a discovered affinity and for requesting permission to publish the discovered affinity.

28.   The system of claim 27, wherein the notification means notifies the user of the discovered affinity and requests permission to publish the affinity only if the affinity publication policy indicates that the affinity publishing means is required to get permission from the user to publish the affinity prior to publishing the affinity.

29.   The system of claim 28, wherein the affinity publication policy specifies

a grace period.

30.   The system of claim 29, wherein the affinity publishing means includes determining means for determining whether the user has responded to the request for permission within a predetermined amount of time.

31.   The system of claim 30, wherein the affinity publication policy includes an auto-publication flag that indicates what action or actions, if any, should be taken if the determining means determines that the user has not responded to the request for permission within the predetermined amount of time.

32.   The system of claim 31, wherein the predetermined amount of time is specified in the affinity publication policy.

33.   A computer program product for publishing information associated with a user, wherein the information comprises a category and an affinity value associated with the category, the computer program product being embodied in a computer readable medium and comprising computer instructions for:

determining whether an affinity publication policy indicates that the information should not be published without first receiving permission from the user to publish the information; and

transmitting to the user a message that requests the user to submit a response that indicates whether or not the user wishes to have the information published if it is determined that the affinity publication policy indicates that the information should not be published without first receiving permission from the user.

34.   The computer program product of claim 33, further comprising computer instructions for determining whether the user submitted a response to the request within a predetermined period of time.

35.   The computer program product of claim 34, further comprising computer instructions for publishing the information if it is determined that the user did not submit a response to the request within the predetermined period of time.

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36.   The computer program product of claim 35, wherein the computer instructions for publishing the information comprises computer instructions for updating a profile associated with the user such that the profile indicates that the user has an affinity for the category included in the information.

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37.   The computer program product of claim 34, further comprising computer instructions for not publishing the information if it is determined that the user did not submit a response to the request within the predetermined period of time.

38.   The computer program product of claim 37, further comprising computer instructions for notifying the user that the information will not be published.

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39.   The computer program product of claim 34, further comprising computer instructions for determining whether an auto-publish flag is set to TRUE or FALSE.

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40.   The computer program product of claim 39, further comprising computer instructions for publishing the information if it is determined that the user did not submit a response to the request within the predetermined period of time and it is also determined that the auto-publish flag is set to TRUE.

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41.   The computer program product of claim 39, further comprising computer instructions for not publishing the information if it is determined that the user did not submit a response to the request within the predetermined period of time and it is also determined that the auto-publish flag is set to FALSE.

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42.   The computer program product of claim 34, further comprising computer

instructions for determining whether there is a particular affinity publication policy that is associated with the user.

43.   The computer program product of claim 42, further comprising computer instructions for accessing the particular affinity publication policy if it is determined that there is a particular affinity publication policy that is associated with the user.

44.   The computer program product of claim 43, further comprising computer instructions for accessing a default affinity publication policy if it is determined that there is no particular affinity publication policy that is associated with the user.

45.   The computer program product of claim 44, wherein the computer instructions for determining whether an affinity publication policy indicates that the information should not be published without first receiving permission from the user to publish the information, comprises computer instructions for determining whether the accessed affinity publication policy indicates that the information should not be published without first receiving permission from the user to publish the information.

46.   The computer program product of claim 33, further comprising computer instructions for determining an affinity value threshold.

47.   The computer program product of claim 46, further comprising computer instructions for determining whether the affinity value is less than the affinity value threshold, wherein if the affinity value is less than the affinity value threshold, the information is not published.

48.   The computer program product of claim 33, further comprising computer instructions for:

receiving the response from the user;

determining whether the response indicates that the user wishes to have the

information published; and

publishing the information if it is determined that the response indicates that the user wishes to have the information published.

5   49.   The computer program product of claim 48, wherein the computer instructions for publishing the information comprises computer instructions for updating a profile associated with the user such that the profile indicates that the user has an affinity for the category included in the information.

10   50.   A computer signal embodied in a carrier wave readable by a computing system and encoding a computer program of instructions for executing a computer process performing the method recited in claim 1.